

Message Text

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E.O. 11652: N/A
TAGS: TECH, IN, US
SUBJECT: INDO-US NUCLEAR RELATIONS

1. THE APRIL 17 EDITION OF THE "TIMES OF INDIA" CARRIES AN ARTICLE BY K.C. KHANNA, A FREQUENT CONTRIBUTOR ON NUCLEAR SUBJECTS, RECAPITULATING (FROM AN INDIAN POINT OF VIEW) US NON-PROLIFERATION MOVES OVER THE PAST YEAR AND THE GOI'S RESPONSE. HE SEES THE NPT RETAINING ITS DISCRIMINATORY CHARACTER VIS-A-VIS NON-NUCLEAR STATES BECAUSE OF THE UNWILLINGNESS OF NUCLEAR WEAPONS STATES TO FOREGO ADDING TO THEIR NUCLEAR ARSENALS. THE TIME WHEN INDIA CAN SIGN THE NPT, HE CONCLUDES, "IS NOT IN SIGHT."

2. KHANNA GOES ON TO CAUTION THE GOI NOT TO ALLOW THE UNCERTAINTY OF FUEL SUPPLIES FOR TARAPUR "TO WARP ITS LONG-TERM PERSPECTIVES"; SHIPMENTS FROM THE US HAVE ALREADY BECOME UNDEPENDABLE AND, WHILE SERIOUS INCONVENIENCE WOULD RESULT FROM SHUTTING DOWN TARAPUR, THE GOI'S PLAN TO INSTALL 3,000

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MW OF NEW GENERATING CAPACITY THIS YEAR, MUCH OF IT IN MAHARASHTRA, WILL TAKE UP THE SLACK. MOREOVER, THE IAEC IS CONFIDENT THAT IT COULD DEVELOP AN ALTERNATIVE FUEL FOR TARAPUR WITHIN THREE YEARS, GIVEN CLEAR DIRECTION AND ADEQUATE FUNDS. AND ONCE INDIA'S AGREEMENTS WITH THE US ARE TERMINATED, INDIA WILL BE FREE TO REPROCESS THE SPENT FUEL RODS.

3. KHANNA REPORTS THAT "MANY INDIAN AND AMERICAN OFFICIALS ARE ALREADY THINKING OF HOW BEST TO TERMINATE THE THREE INDO-US ACCORDS ON TARAPUR WITHOUT CAUSING UNDUE DAMAGE TO MUTUAL RELATIONS." AMONG THE COMPLICATED LEGAL ISSUES TO BE UNTANGLED ARE REPAYMENT OF THE US LOAN FOR THE CONSTRUCTION OF TARAPUR AND POSSIBLE INDIAN ACTION AGAINST THE US AT THE HAGUE COURT UNDER THE VIENNA CONVENTION FOR BREACH OF CONTRACT. STATING THAT "NUCLEAR POLICY IS TOO SERIOUS A MATTER TO BE DISPOSED OF BY INDIVIDUAL POLITICIANS OR IN A SECRET CONCLAVE OF OFFICIALS", KHANNA ARGUES THAT "BOTH NATIONAL SELF-RESPECT AND SELF-INTEREST DEMAND THAT BEST AVAILABLE TALENT IN THE COUNTRY...BE POOLED TO CHART OUT THE FUTURE COURSE" OF INDIA'S NUCLEAR POLICY.

4. SEVERAL NEW DELHI PAPERS PUBLISHED THE SAME DAY A PTI REPORT ON THE APRIL 15 MEETING BETWEEN MEA SECRETARY VELLODI AND JOSEPH NYE. VELLODI IS SAID TO HAVE EXPRESSED INDIA'S CONCERN AT THE DELAY AND CONTINUING UNCERTAINTY SURROUNDING THE TARAPUR FUEL SHIPMENTS, POINTING OUT THAT ANY FURTHER DELAY IN RELEASING THE OVERDUE SHIPMENT OF 7.6 TONS WOULD HAVE "SERIOUS IMPLICATIONS" FOR THE FUNCTIONING OF TARAPUR. NYE REPORTEDLY RESPONDED THAT THE ADMINISTRATION WAS DOING ALL IT COULD TO EXPEDITE A "POSITIVE DECISION" BY THE NRC. VELLODI AND NYE ARE ALSO SAID TO HAVE DISCUSSED THE PROBLEM OF SPENT FUEL STORAGE AT TARAPUR AND DISARMAMENT IN THE CONTEXT OF THE UPCOMING SSOD.

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5. MOST PAPERS ALSO CARRIED OVER THE WEEKEND A PTI STORY, DRAWING ON THE 1977-78 DEPT OF ATOMIC ENERGY REPORT, STATING THAT INDIA HAS STARTED REPROCESSING SPENT FUEL IN ITS NEWLY-BUILT TARAPUR PLANT. THE DAE REPORT ALSO NOTES THAT TARAPUR'S SPENT FUEL STORAGE POOLS ARE FILLING UP BECAUSE THE US HAS NOT GIVEN INDIA PERMISSION TO REPROCESS TARAPUR'S SPENT FUEL. WE ARE TRYING TO OBTAIN A COPY OF THIS DOCUMENT.

COMMENT: THE PRESS STORY GIVES THE IMPRESSION (WHILE THE "PATRIOT" HEADLINE STATES) THAT INDIA IS REPROCESSING SPENT FUEL FROM THE TARAPUR ATOMIC POWER STATION AT THE PREFRE FACILITY. THIS IS, OF COURSE, NOT THE CASE BUT THE STORY COULD FURTHER CONFUSE DISCUSSION OF THE SENSITIVE REPROCESSING ISSUE.

GOHEEN

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